(b) whether the draft Bill is ready;

(c) whether it was a part of the agreement in the Common Minimum Programme for governance; and

(d) the thinking and preparation of Government on this subject, at present?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) There has been report in the print and electronic media about the public announcement of the Leader of Opposition supporting the Women Reservation Bill.

(b) to (d) United Progressive Alliance Government in its National Common Minimum Programme issued on 27.5.2004 has stated that it will take the lead to introduce legislation for 1/3rd reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and in the Legislative Assemblies of States. Efforts have been made, by the Government in the direction of evolving political consensus on re-introduction of the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament. United Progressive Alliance held a meeting of the constituents of the Alliance and the Left Parties on the 22nd August, 2005 to evolve a consensus. Subsequently, a meeting with the leaders of the National Democratic Alliance and other political leaders was held on 24th August, 2005. Three proposals relating to Women Reservation Bill were considered *inter alia* includes the proposal of the Election Commission of India which is commonly known as the Gill formula to make it mandatory for the recognized political parties to ensure putting of minimum agreed percentage for women in State Assembly and Parliamentary elections so as to allow them to retain the recognition with the Election Commission as political parties. All proposals including Gill formula are under consideration of the Government.

Amendment in Hindu Succession Act

2852. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to amend the Hindu Succession Act;

(b) if so, the nature of proposed amendment; and

(c) by when a Bill is likely to be introduced in Parliament?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Question does not arise in view of the reply to (a) above.

Working days of High Courts and Supreme Court

2853. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the working days in High Courts and Supreme Court are less than those in the lower courts in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government proposes to enhance the working days of High Courts and Supreme Court for speedy disposal of cases;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) by when the working days are likely to be enhanced?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) to (e) The working days in the Supreme Court and High Courts are regulated by the rules framed by the respective Courts. According to available information, the Supreme Court of India works for 222 days in a year, all High Courts in the country normally have 210 working days in a year and the number of working days of the District/Subordinate Courts are regulated by the concerned High Court.

The Department of Justice in July, 2001 had invited the views of the High Courts regarding the number of working days in the High Courts and the curtailment of their vacations. Replies were received from 14 High Courts. The High Court of Uttaranchal (now Uttarakhand) increased the number of its working days in a year from 210 to 224 and the High Court of Karnataka from 210 to 214. Jharkhand High Court had no objection to increasing the number of working days. Other High Courts had not favoured increase in the number of their working days.

In the year 2002-03, this Department had examined the matter of enhancing the number of working days in Courts. In order to reduce the huge pendencies prevailing in the High Courts, this Department addressed to all the High Courts, requesting them to fix the period of vacations in such a way that the number of working days of High Courts generally do not fall below 222 days in a year.

Judicial system at grassroot level

2854. DR. ABHISHEK MANU SINGHVI: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether, while welcoming the decision of Government to appoint first class magistrates in about 6000 mobile courts, being set up to establish a quick and efficient system of judiciary at grassroot level, Government would simultaneously consider creating a free legal cell at district level, which would provide legal aid to rural litigants, either free of cost or at nominal cost; and

(b) whether the system of plea-bargaining would be realistically explained to the rural litigants, so that unnecessary delay and legal expenditure is reduced significantly?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) and (b) Setting up of Gram Nyayalayas with mobility in the rural areas would bring to the people of rural areas speedy, affordable and substantial justice. In order to make system of participatory justice a reality, legal aid, mechanism of conciliation and plea bargaining at the grassroots would be a part of Gram Nyayalayas.

Procedure for appointment of Judges

2855. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether performance of the in-house collegium system of selecting High Court Judges has stood the test of functional efficiency;

(b) if so, why there are 26 per cent unfilled vacancies, contributing significantly towards piling up of cases;